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NEWS

For immediate release

Jacob Keith Watson, Ouachita alumnus and Broadway performer, to present recital Jan. 26

By Trennis Henderson, OBU vice president for communications

January 12, 2017

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Broadway performer Jacob Keith Watson, a 2011 Ouachita Baptist University graduate, will return to his alma mater Jan. 26-27 to perform a recital and lead a masterclass.

Watson will be accompanied by collaborative pianist Jason Weisinger, who has performed with the Boston POPS and is scheduled to perform in a workshop in conjunction with the Metropolitan Opera and Cincinnati Opera.

The Jan. 26 recital will be held at 7:30 p.m. in Ouachita's McBeth Recital Hall in Mabree Fine Arts Center. Tickets are \$10 each, and the performance is open to the public.

The masterclass featuring Watson and Weisinger teaching selected Ouachita voice principals will be held Jan. 27 from 3 to 5 p.m. in McBeth Recital Hall. It will feature students performing music theatre repertoire and monologues. Admission is free and open to the public.

"I am excited for our students and arts patrons from surrounding communities to see and hear Jacob and his wonderful collaborative pianist Jason Weisinger, who himself is an accomplished singer and actor," said Dr. Jon Secrest, Watson's voice coach at Ouachita and the Addie Mae Maddox Professor of Music. "Their recital presented at the 2014 national convention for the National Association of Teachers of Singing brought the crowd to their feet – no small task when you're talking about a room full of 700 voice teachers."

"Having the opportunity to return to Ouachita and share some of the wonderful experiences with the people and the place that helped make me who I am is an incredible gift," Watson said. "It's truly an honor that Dr. Secrest asked me to return and have a chance to give a little back to my alma mater. I'm so excited to get to work with the students and revisit such a special place!"

"Ouachita gave me a variety of tools and helped to develop a work ethic that I've needed and continue to need as I make my way through this crazy career," Watson added. "At OBU, I was pushed to try anything and everything. Professors had me working on Shakespeare to Puccini to Sondheim to Mamet. They truly believed in experiencing every possible facet of acting and being a theatre artist. The things I learned at Ouachita have proven to be invaluable."

According to Secrest, "Jacob's drive to succeed led him from Wynne, Ark., onto the stages of Ouachita and then beyond, to regional and national performing opportunities, including multiple Broadway venues now. His immense talent and uncanny manner of storytelling through the medium of song have fueled the journey thus far, and his continued cultivation of these gifts will lead him to many more such opportunities I'm sure."

"Jacob continues to build momentum as a regular on the Broadway stage," Secrest noted. "His recent run in the Broadway production of *Phantom of the Opera* segued directly into L.A. performances of *Amélie* by

Daniel Messé, starring Phillipa Soo of the New York City *Hamilton* cast. The L.A. production will move to the Great White Way in the spring of 2017.”

Some of Watson’s favorite credits include the Tony-nominated revival of *Violet* starring Sutton Foster with the Roundabout Theatre Company, the national/international tour of *Chicago the Musical*, the acclaimed Encores! revival of *1776* and the world premiere of *Amélie* at Berkeley Rep and Ahmanson Theatre. Watson is a past winner of the prestigious Lotte Lenya Competition, the NATS National Music Theatre Competition and a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Upcoming projects include a solo project currently in development as well as the Broadway transfer of *Amélie* to the Walter Kerr Theatre this spring. Watson lives in New York City with his wife, Elisabeth Hipp, also a Ouachita graduate.

In demand as a vocalist, pianist, vocal coach and composer, Jason Weisinger has been praised as “satisfying, occasionally sublime” by the *Boston Globe*. As a pianist, Weisinger regularly collaborates with many up-and-coming vocalists including Watson’s winning performance at the 2012 National Music Theater competition. Weisinger’s recent engagements have included performances of the sailor in *Dido and Aeneas* with the Mark Morris Dance Group, *Pulcinella* with The Orchestra NOW (TÖN), The Boston POPS revue *Simply Sondheim* and scenes of *Idomeneo* alongside Dawn Upshaw at Tanglewood Music Center. He is an alumnus of Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar, the Tanglewood Music Center, Songfest as a Marc and Eva Stern fellow and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, where he completed his master’s degree.

Tickets for the Jan. 26 recital are available for \$10 each through the Jones Performing Arts Center Box Office or online at www.obu.edu/boxoffice. Ouachita students may receive one free ticket each with a current student ID. For more information, contact Dr. Jon Secrest at 870-245-5134 or secrestj@obu.edu.

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